United Nations

Daily Highlights

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MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General expresses condemns mortar attack on market in Sarajevo on Saturday, and instructs UNPROFOR to conduct immediate investigation; by Sunday, no certainty established yet as to origin of attack.

+ New Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development begins first two-week session; will consider medium-term planning issues and sections of UNCED's Agenda 21 relating to energy.

+ Violence against women, treatment of girl children and impact on women of economic hardship are amongst issues covered by Committee on Elimination of Discrimination against Women, as it ends 13th session.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali expressed alarm and outrage on Saturday at the mortar attack on an open air market in Sarajevo that morning, in which dozens of civilians were killed and scores injured. According to a United Nations spokesman, he instructed the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) to conduct an immediate investigation to try to establish the facts concerning the atrocity.

His Special Representative for the former Yugoslavia, Yasushi Akashi, went to Sarajevo yesterday to supervise the investigation. The spokesman reported that Mr. Akashi, accompanied by the Force Commander of UNPROFOR, General Jean Cot, visited the scene of the attack. They later met with President Alija Izetbegovic and Prime Minister Haris Silajdzic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and with the leader of the Bosnian Serbs, Radovan Karadzic, and his senior military leaders. Mr. Akashi was seeking steps to reduce tension and prevent further acts of actrocity in the city. He also sought to obtain an immediate cease-fire in and around Sarajevo.

By the end of the day yesterday, UNPROFOR had been unable to establish with certainty who had fired the 120 mm mortar shell which caused the bloodshed.

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Regarding action taken to protect "safe areas", of which Sarajevo is one, the Secretary-General recently stated that UNPROFOR did not need to seek the consent of the parties involved for operations falling within its mandate. In a letter to the Security Council, dated 28 January, he said, however, that the use of air power by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces for punitive or pre-emptive purposes would require further authorization by the North Atlantic Council (S/1994/94).

The Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina has requested an urgent meeting of the Security Council. In a letter to the Council President, dated 5 February (S/1994/124), the Bosnian Prime Minister said that continuing inaction by the Council had contributed to the massacre, and that a failure to respond to it would "embolden and further encourage" a repeat of the tragedy.

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The newly established Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development this morning opened its first two-week session. Addressing the meeting, Nitin Desai, Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, said the capacity to manage a more interdependent world would largely depend on the ability to manage energy. He stressed that informed expert opinion must be considered by the forums which made energy decisions and called on the Committee to provide expert advice on what issues should receive priority consideration.

The Committee will consider medium-term planning in the development and use of new and renewable sources of energy, as well as energy for development. It will also consider sections of Agenda 21 of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) relating to energy. Included on its agenda is an examination of ways to accelerate the exploration and development of energy resources in developing countries, and the need to ensure the flow of external resources in support of national efforts. In its discussion of energy and sustainable development, the Committee will focus on issues concerning overall energy development, new and renewable sources of energy and the efficient use of energy resources.

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Violence against women, treatment of girl children and the impact on women of economic hardship were amongst the issues highlighted by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, which ended its thirteenth session on Friday evening. The Committee, which reviewed the reports of 15 countries, also urged States parties to the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to withdraw their reservations regarding its articles on marriage and family relations.

In the General Recommendation regarding equality in marriage and family relations, the Committee stated that violence against women had great significance for women's rights and freedoms. States parties were urged to ensure that in both public and family life, women would be free of gender-based violence that impeded them as individuals.

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With respect to the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, the Committee strongly emphasized that one of the main objectives was to eliminate discrimination against girl children, both before and after birth, and to improve their status, especially regarding health, nutrition and education. It also noted that the severe economic conditions facing many countries had particularly serious implications for women, who constituted the majority of those at the grass-roots level. The Committee called on Governments, international agencies and international financial institutions to alleviate the burden imposed on the lives of women and men, and their children.

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